

F  
104  
G8C5

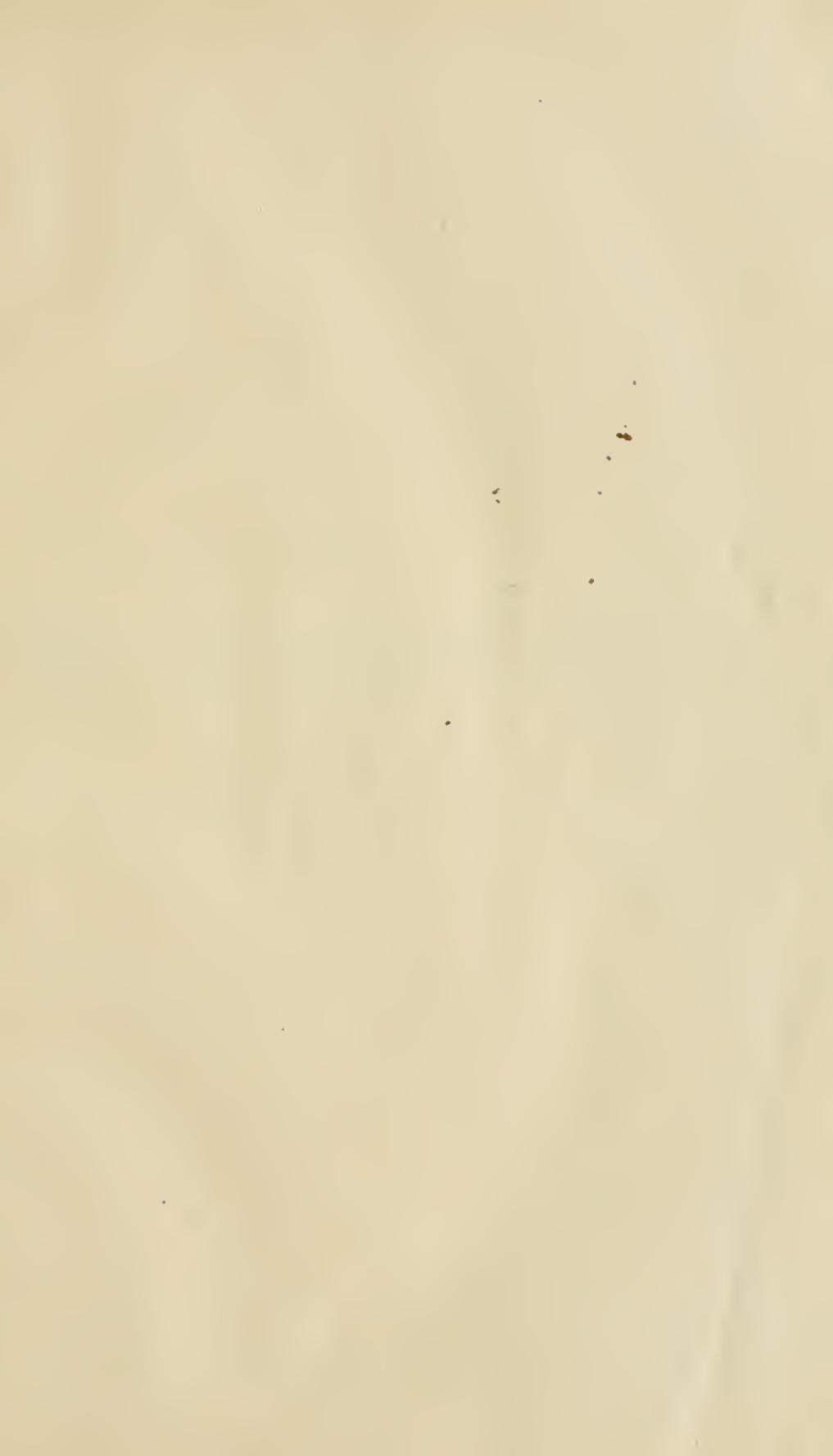
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

*Chap. F104*  
*Shelf G8C5*  
PRESENTED BY

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.









# HISTORY

OF THE

# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

OF

GREENWICH, CONN.

BY THE PASTOR,

REV. FRANK S. CHILD, A. M.



# AN HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE

## First Congregational Church,

OF

### GREENWICH, CONN.

ON SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 1879,

BY THE PASTOR,

REV. FRANK S. CHILD, A. M.

---

OLD GREENWICH, CONN.  
1879.

Flo  
6863

THIS DISCOURSE WAS PREPARED AND PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE PEOPLE OF THE PARISH. IT IS WISE FOR A CHURCH TO KNOW THE HISTORY OF ITS STRUGGLES AND EXPERIENCES. WITH THE STRONG HOPE THAT GOOD MAY BE DONE, COURAGE RENEWED AND POWERS ENLISTED IN THE SERVICE OF THE GREAT HEAD OF THE CHURCH, THESE WORDS ARE PUT FORTH BY THE PASTOR OF GREENWICH FIRST CHURCH.



## DISCOURSE.

---

“Be strong and of a good courage;” Joshua 1-6.

---

Men are so susceptible that one word will often dishearten them; and again, one word will often kindle a great, brave spirit. The same event recited by two observers will produce the most unlike results. We tinge the story with our own personality. If we are despondent, we impart the same sombre spirit to those who touch us. If we are rich in hope, we enrich others, and hopefulness marks the life about us. As one reviews the life of a church or a people, he finds much that may be interpreted to his help or hindrance. It rests with him whether lessons of sorrow and discouragement shall be taught, or whether lessons of joy and good cheer and bright promise. The ancient servants of God had a dark history to recall, considered from one point of view. Disobediences, griefs, wanderings, chastisements! If Moses and Joshua and the later leaders had dwelt on these things and had never brightened the narratives with the memory of God's mercy and goodness and affection and tender concern, the heart of Israel had sunk within them and they would never have deserted their Egyptian slavery or entered the Promised Land. But through all these dark seasons God speaks to his people as he does to Joshua in our text—“Be strong and of a good courage.” In the hour of disappointment He allures by promises. In the day of defeat He emboldens by assurances.

These words of the Great King to one of His generals, are inherited by us. Speaking to Joshua, the Divine Master speaks to His people of to-day: “Be strong and of a good courage,”

says the message. "His Church stands as God's messenger and servant to the men about us—" for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance, the land which I sware unto their fathers to give them;" and the land which we, as a servant, as a Church of God, shall divide to the waiting people, is not a land like to the earthly Canaan which it fell to Joshua's lot to divide. Our's is an heavenly inheritance. We make out the title deed in a certain fashion here and possession is given hereafter. But to do this work, some earnest requirements are made: "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee; turn not from it to the right hand or the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."

Turning to the past, and scanning events which have centered in our church during a period of more than two centuries, what do we learn? We read of struggle, labor, discouragement, trouble: but we also read of faith, devotion, growth and fruitfulness.<sup>1</sup>

The town of Greenwich was settled in 1640. Twenty-six years previous to this date, Block sailed up the East river, entered the sound, and had the honor of "discovering" what was then called by its Indian name Monakewego. In this year, 1640, Daniel Patrick and Robert Feakes landed on Greenwich Point (*Trumbull's Hist. Conn.*), and bargained with the Indians for a large tract of land, acting as agents for the New Haven colony.<sup>2</sup> Among the first comers were Jaffere Ferris, Robert Husted and Angell Husted. After the town was settled the inhabitants revolted to the Dutch. Peter Stuyvesant,

---

<sup>1</sup> In preparing this discourse, the pastor has been kindly aided by the librarians of the Astor Library, the Union Theological Sem. Library, the Merchantile Library, and the Historical Society Library, New York. Mead's History of Greenwich has also been helpful. Some parts of our history are especially obscure, so that it has been a difficult matter to find any sure facts relating to the church at certain periods.

<sup>2</sup> The deed of purchase was made July 18, 1640, and is preserved among the town records.

the then Governor of New Netherlands, incorporated them into his territory; but they returned in their allegiance to the Eastern colonies after a short period and remained true to the East. At the time that Greenwich was settled, Rev. John Warham had been preaching for ten years in the town of Windsor; but there were very few colonists in the land, so that we may rightfully claim to be among the first of the towns settled. In this year, 1640, Mr. Hopkins was Governor, and Mr. Haynes Deputy-Governor. The settlement in Greenwich saw severe troubles. The Indians harrassed them.<sup>3</sup> Their property was stolen; several lives were lost. The community became demoralized. The odor of a bad name went abroad. But meanwhile there was progress among the New England Colonies.<sup>4</sup> In 1643, on May 19th, the colonies became confederated. Their aim was "to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and enjoy the liberties of the gospel in purity and peace." At the date of the confederation there were fifteen churches in the colony where ordained or installed clergymen ministered to the people; and some of the churches supported two clergymen, a preacher and a pastor. There were in that year four other towns which were also taxed for preaching, namely, Stonington, Middletown, Greenwich and Rye. (*Authority of Trumbull.*) Preaching in these four towns was only occasional. An early historian says that the "general court would not suffer any plantation to be made which would not support an able, orthodox minister." The Connecticut colony numbered seven-

---

<sup>3</sup> Among the places of peculiar interest to the people of this community is Labden's Rock. Tradition says that Cornelius Labden, a Dutchman, starting out from old Greenwich, was pursued by Indian warriors. Coming to a precipitous rock, Labden plunged down its steep side and his enemies followed him. His life alone was preserved; but this was at the expense of his two legs, which were sadly broken by the fall.

<sup>4</sup> In 1642, the Common Laws were put upon record. They were twelve in number, and among them was the following: "If any man or woman be a witch, that is, hath or consulteth with a familiar spirit, they shall be put to death." Ex. xxii. 18; Levit. xx. 22; and Deut. xviii. 10 and 11.

teen hundred families, or between eight and nine thousand souls; (to-day we number over 500,000). There were twenty ministers. This would give a minister to eighty-five families. For more than thirty years Greenwich is supplied with occasional preaching. The "times" are so hard, the colonist's struggles are so severe that subscription or taxation cannot support continuous ministrations. In 1660 the male inhabitants of the town numbered about twenty (*vide Mead*). All were obliged to contribute "pro rata" for the support of preaching, and attendance on divine service was enforced by law. Non-attendance meant a penalty of five shillings; and the penalty was repeated at each disobedience. In 1670 there appears to have been some more distinct organization of the Church.<sup>5</sup> Four years previously the people had builded a school house; and about this date they built their first church edifice. The church building stood not far from Greenwich Cove. In 1670, William Grimes, a bachelor recluse, leaves by will to his trustees, for the benefit of the Church, some thirty acres of land.<sup>6</sup> This bequest, doubtless, encouraged the people, for, in 1675, they voted to erect a parsonage house for the minister, and, in 1676, they called the Rev. Mr. Wizwell to this charge. Mr. Wizwell declined the call, and the church remained two years longer with-

---

<sup>5</sup> In the "Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Conn." prepared by the General Association at its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, the date of the organization of Greenwich First Church is given as 1670.

<sup>6</sup> William Grimes of Greenwich. His will: "These testify that I, William Grimes, of this towne of Greenwich, being of perfect memory and understanding, but being sick in body, do give all my land to ye disposal of Joseph Mead, John Renolds, and Eliphalet Jones, to bee disposed of by them in such a waye as thaye shall judge meet for Inlarging of ye towne of greenwich by accommodating such inhabitant or inhabitants as shall bee admitted into ye towne in an orderly way, provided they be such men as the aforesed Mead, Renolds and Jones shall judge desirable for the promoting of church and commonwealth. This my Deade of gift shall stand good and firme at ye time of my dessease.

"Witness my hand, this 18 July 1670.

WM. GRIMES."

"Witnesses, { RUTH FERRIS,  
                  { DEBORA BARLOW." }

out a pastor. The Rev. Jeremiah Peck was the first pastor of this Church.<sup>7</sup> He settled among the people of Greenwich in the year 1678. He came from Elizabethtown, N. J. His salary was fixed at fifty pounds with firewood, or sixty pounds without firewood, and he chose the latter. One of the most influential of Mr. Peck's parishioners was Lieut. Lockwood.<sup>8</sup> The first pastor of the church continued with the people of Greenwich eleven years.<sup>9</sup> In 1689 a discussion having arisen in the church with reference to the baptism of the children of parents who were not members of the Church, Mr. Peck, to avoid further discussion and trouble, resigned, accepted a call to Waterbury, Conn., and became the first stated supply, and the first installed pastor of the Church in Waterbury. Mr. Peck was an earnest and efficient minister. He died in 1699, seventy-seven years of age. Many of his descendants are respected members of this community.

In 1691 this church called Rev. Abraham Pierson. The call was accepted, and Mr. Pierson came here as stated supply, serving the people faithfully for nearly four years.<sup>10</sup> The new incumbent was graduated from Harvard College in 1688. He began his labors in New Jersey, from which State he was called to this church. Mr. Pierson was ordained 1687; and settled in Newark, N. J. In 1691, the year of Mr. Pierson's coming,

---

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Peck was one of "The 27 Proprietors of 1672." This association purchased from the Indians that part of the town known as Horseneck. The purchasers were men of good character, and their many descendants speak good words for them to-day.

<sup>8</sup> In 1687, Gershon Lockwood and Wm. Lockwood arranged for a bridge across the Myanos, agreeing to receive as payment for building "whatever the town should see fit to give after the work was done," a style of contract certainly not popular in these times.

<sup>9</sup> In 1688 the legal voters numbered about fifty, among whom are the names Ferris, Lockwood, Husted, Renolds, Palmer, Marshal, Peck.

<sup>10</sup> Trumbull states that Dr. Pierson was called from Newark, New Jersey, to Killingworth. He makes no record of the nearly four years' pastorate in Greenwich. This, of course, was an oversight on the part of Trumbull, as the ecclesiastical authorities are clear upon this point.

the plan for a new church building was agitated. The edifice was to be 32x26 feet, and fifteen feet as to height. The vital question at issue was the situation of the new building. Politics ran high even in those days. There were rough words said. Bitter feelings were engendered. The people could reach no decision. The working, helping force of the society was crippled; and Mr. Pierson became disheartened. Believing that his work could not be blessed under these circumstances, he accepted a call to Killingworth, in 1694, and this church lost one of its greatest names. Mr. Pierson took a keen interest in educational matters. He loved the study and he felt the importance of a higher scholarship for the people of the colony. Shortly after his removal from Greenwich, he threw his whole force of heart and mind into founding an educational institution. Having gained the support and coöperation of two friends, a meeting was called and plans discussed.<sup>11</sup> This resulted in the founding of Yale College. The college was incorporated October, 1701, and in November of that year Mr. Pierson was chosen its first rector or president. The college was somewhat migratory in its character during the presidency of Dr. Pierson. We hear of it at Saybrooke, at New Haven, and at Killingworth. Its first commencement was at Saybrooke, September 13th, 1702. The students continued the most of the time at Killingworth with the president. The first commencement at New Haven was in 1717. Dr. Pierson wrought well for the college during his life; but his service was brief. His death occurred in 1704, ten years after his departure from Greenwich, three years after the inauguration of his great educational scheme. Dr. Pierson was a man greatly beloved and universally esteemed for his accomplishments and abilities.

---

<sup>11</sup>The two colleagues of Mr. Pierson were Samuel Andrew of Milford, and Noadiah Russel of Bradford.

The Rev. Salmon Treat was Dr. Pierson's successor. He came to Greenwich in 1695, and two years later accepted a call to Preston. Mr. Treat's salary was fifty-five pounds and fire-wood. This was increased to sixty pounds and firewood. Every third sabbath he preached at Horseneck. (The matter is discussed in Mead's History of Greenwich, and in Dr. Lindley's Historical Sermon.) The angry discussions of the times were not prolific of rich spiritual results. Mr. Treat probably was unhappy for this reason and did not choose to remain where trials, like the flocks of pigeons in those early days, obscured the light and almost overwhelmed the land. His death occurred in 1762.

The Rev. Joseph Morgan became preacher to this people in 1697. He was a graduate of Yale College. His ministry in Greenwich covers a period of eleven years, the concluding years of which were devoted entirely to Horseneck. A new trouble arises in the question, who shall have the most of the minister, Old Greenwich or Horseneck? Old Greenwich said, "we must have him most;" Horseneck said, "we must have him most." It appears that Mr. Morgan gave very little time to either, but devoted his time to grinding the farmer's grist. Mr. Morgan was not absorbed in his theological studies. The preacher turned miller with no great effort. The people, however, were dissatisfied. They expressed their dissatisfaction in no doubtful way, so that Mr. Morgan, in 1708, resigned his charge of the church and devoted his whole time to the mill.

In the year 1707, the community of old Greenwich petitioned the General Assembly at Hartford, that the church might be "embodied in state ecclesiastical, with consent of neighboring churches as a necessary preparation, as we conceive, for the settlement of Nathaniel Bowers." Up to this period the church had been supported and managed by the town. It was a union of church and state in a measure. In the year 1666, however, an act had been passed to appoint a synod or assembly to take

charge of ecclesiastical affairs.<sup>12</sup> This church did not make use of it until the year 1707. Mr. Morgan in 1700 decided that his time, what little he did give to ministerial service, should be given to Horseneck. During the period after 1700 Rev. Nathaniel Bowers supplied this pulpit. It is supposed that he was installed in 1707 or 1708. His name does not appear after the year 1710. The two settlements came to an understanding in respect to preaching in the year 1704 or 1705.<sup>13</sup> They voluntarily divided, and articles of agreement were drawn up by them and signed. This division received the sanction of the General Court in June, 1713.

After the dismission of Mr. Bowers the Rev. Mr. Jones supplies the Church for a season. In 1715 the Rev. Richard Sackett was the preacher. Mr. Sackett was a man of pleasing address and popular with the people. He graduated from Yale College 1709. After preaching for Old Greenwich some two years, he accepted a call to New Greenwich and became their zealous minister for eleven years. His death occurred in 1727.

During these years the number of clergymen was increasing. In 1713 we find that Connecticut had one ordained minister for eighty families and for every four hundred souls. The moral tone of this part of the country was also becoming purer and stronger. Law and gospel joined hands. The legislature spake the sentiment of the clergy. "Like Moses and Aaron,"

---

<sup>12</sup> In 1708, the Conn. legislature also enacted "That all ministers of the gospel that now are or shall hereafter be settled in this colony, during the continuance of their public service in the gospel ministry, shall have their estates lying in the same town where they dwell and all its folks belonging to their several families exempted: and they are hereby exempted and freed from being entered in public lists and payments of rates." (*Vide Trumbull and Hollister.*)

<sup>13</sup> The articles of agreement are signed (*vide Town Record*) by:

EBENEZER MEAD, JOSHUA KNAP, TIMOTHY KING, of the West side of the Myanos. SAMUEL PECK, JOHN RENOLDS, ROBERT LOCKWOOD, of the East side of the Myanos.

*Witnesses:* JONATHAN SELLECK, JOHN DAVENPORT, SAMUEL HAIT, DAVID WATERBURY.

says the old record, "they walked together in the most endear-ed friendship." In 1707 the people were so wise as to elect a clergyman, the Rev. Gurden Saltonstall, to the governorship of the colony. But although the religious prospects were so bright through the land, there were dark days for many of the churches.

The next pastor of this church was the Rev. Ephraim Bost-wick. He was installed by the Consociation<sup>14</sup> 1730 (?); and dismissed in 1746. A period when the church was without an installed pastor ensues. In 1763 the Consociation met and installed the Rev. Ebenezer Davenport. This pastor served the people for six years, when death released him from further toil in the vineyard.

The Rev. Robert Morris was installed 1785.<sup>15</sup> Nine years of devoted labor among the people of Greenwich mark his career. In the midst of his great usefulness when the richness of maturity was his, he was summoned to his "exceeding great reward." The impression of his heart and mind remained long with the people. After 1794 the pulpit was supplied by the Rev. Platt Buffet and the Rev. Abner Benedict.<sup>16</sup> The eighteenth century closes during the ministration of Mr. Ben-edict.

What were the influences of this church during this one hundred and thirty years of its existence we cannot measure. We have no figures—all records were probably lost during the

---

<sup>14</sup> The Fairfield Consociation was probably formed 1709. The association divided into two bodies, namely: The Fairfield East and the Fairfield West consociation in 1734. (*Vide "Cong. Year Book."*)

<sup>15</sup> Robert Morris was a bachelor. His mother lived with him in the parsonage. Mrs. Morris was a very nervous body and she cared for her bachel-elor son as though he were yet a child. One afternoon when she was out to tea, she suddenly recollected that Robert was left at home alone. Rising quickly from the chair she hysterically exclaimed "There! I must go home. Robert will fall into the well." And the lady hurried to the house to find Robert still alive and comfortable.

<sup>16</sup> Mr. Buffet settled in Stanwich in 1796, and died in 1850. Mr. Benedict settled in Middlefield in 1771, and died 1818.

Revolutionary struggle. Tradition tells proud stories of Greenwich's worth and loyalty during the years of turmoil. It is said that her preachers taught wisely and lived bravely; and that the people became so imbued with this stern, manly, valiant spirit, that none did larger service for liberty of thought or purity of life.

The new century begins with the Rev. Samuel Sturges as pastor. Mr. Sturges was licensed May 26th, 1789. He remained with this people seven years; and then he preached to the people of Bethel. Mr. Sturges was a farmer-minister. He loved his garden and his orchards. It was delight for him to discuss crops and prospects; to test theories of agriculture and devise ways of land improvement. He sacrificed himself so thoroughly to these pursuits that his time of study was quite limited and curtailed. Yet he had the regard of the parish and did true service to the souls of many men.<sup>17</sup>

The Rev. John Noyes was the successor of Mr. Sturges. Mr. Noyes was licensed October 14th, 1783. He came among the people of Greenwich in the year 1810<sup>18</sup>,<sup>19</sup>. Mr. Noyes owned a farm a few miles back in the country. It was his custom to pass four or five days on the farm with his family, and the remaining days of the week he visited among the members of the church and society. Mr. Noyes was of a very social dis-

<sup>17</sup> At this period no prayer or conference meetings were held during week days. The first week day meetings were held in 1807.

<sup>18</sup> The old Society and church books are very meagre in their records, and those in possession of the church to-day date back less than a hundred years. The treasurer's books give us some definite information. From them we learn that the annual salary of committee men varied from fifty cents to one dollar and a half. In 1830 it was one dollar. The treasurer was more generously paid, receiving for his services the sum of two dollars. In those days it cost thirty-seven cents to sweep the church.

<sup>19</sup> Among the charges on the treasurer's book we find one which denotes the status of the temperance question at that date. At the Society's annual meeting, 18—, the sum of \$1.25 was expended on liquors with which to regale the company.

position. He was a better pastor than preacher. His labor was with men individually. He did not appear to possess the power to reach them from the pulpit. But his record is good and we recall him with praise. He remained with the people until the year 1824. His death occurred in 1846.

The Rev. Charles F. Butler was called to this church in 1824. He was a graduate of Yale College. Before coming to this place he had gained a reputation for zeal and piety. Laboring in South Salem, N. Y., he had won many souls to Christ and built up the church in a most encouraging manner. Turning their thoughts to him, the people of Greenwich were so favored as to engage him as their pastor. His ministering here extended over one decade. Those were fruitful years for this people. Then several times during his pastorate in Greenwich the Spirit of God was poured upon the people and the church was blessed with many additions to its membership, with a higher type of piety, and with a larger spirit of work. Mr. Butler was afflicted with disease during these times of earnest toil, but he battled manfully till the last. His great strength was as a preacher. The words of truth which he so simply and eloquently spake to his listeners touched powerfully their hearts and incited many souls to nobler living.<sup>20</sup> In 1834 his health obliged him to leave this place and he removed to Central New York. He rested from his earthly labors in August, 1866, at the age of 76.

After the resignation of Mr. Butler the Society took action with reference to the building of a new church. The second church edifice is supposed to have stood somewhere near the

---

<sup>20</sup> Among Mr. Butler's many agreeable characteristics was that of speaking well of all, and ill of none. One of our most esteemed parishioners of to-day, recalls the time when Mr. Butler was present in a company where some one made an unpleasant remark respecting a member of the community. Mr. Butler whacked his cane with considerable vehemence on the floor and exclaimed "never say such things as that—never talk about your neighbors."

Myanos. The third church edifice<sup>21</sup> stood on the elevation of land south of the present residence of Mr. Charles Husted, at the end of the street leading by Mrs. Burr Lockwood's house. We have no record as to the time when the second edifice, or third were erected. In 1835 a contract was made with Joshua Ferris to build the house in which we worship to-day. For more than two years, while the work of building was in hand, the church had no pastor. We read that in 1836 the Society voted that the committee "employ a preacher so much of the time as they may deem expedient." But it proved an unfortunate policy, the church had a season of great trial. In 1836 when the Rev. Thomas Payne began to preach in this place, there was not a male member in the church. Deaconesses distributed the bread and the wine at communion service. It was the women of the church, working in their fervent, trustful, energetic spirit, that saved the inheritance for the faithful of to-day. In 1837 Mr. Payne was installed by the Fairfield West Consociation. After the new pastor began his work in this parish, he found that the work was all his—there was no one to aid him in public prayer and exhortation. He must bear the whole burden himself. Some one observed to him that he must go over to Horseneck and get the brethren to help us. He replied: "No, we will raise them up ourselves," and his words were prophetic. The church was graciously blessed by his ministrations; and when, in 1842, he resigned his pastorate, he left the people in a strong, prosperous state, with great promise of future fruitfulness. The death of Mr. Payne occurred in 1853.

---

<sup>21</sup> The third church edifice was builded by Congregationalists aided by the Episcopalian element of the town. In 1800 the Congregationalists held divine service in the church in the morning, and the Episcopalians at four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the ancient seats from this third edifice stands in the yard in front of the residence of John W. Hendrie, Esq. The frame of the building was purchased by Capt. Chas. Hendrie, and may be seen at the present date in the barn of Mr. W. A. Cummings.

The Rev. S. B. S. Bissell began his ministry with this people in September, 1842. Mr. Bissell was graduated from Yale College in the year 1830, and from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1834. He became General Agent for the American Tract Society, from which service he was called to this church. His ministry covers a period of eleven years.<sup>22</sup> During the second year of his pastorate, the present parsonage was built at an expense of between \$1,500 and \$1,800. In the Winter of '43, Mr. Bissell rejoiced to see some forty converts as the fruit of his revival efforts. Numbers were added to the church at different periods. (Mr. Bissell ordained Mr. S. Kimberly Ferris as deacon of the church, November 3d, 1850.) His devout and faithful ministry with this people closed in 1853, when he accepted the Secretaryship of the American S. S. Union, in which position he serves to-day.

The Rev. Wm. A. Hyde was called by this society in 1854, and ministered to the parish for one decade. He was a man of strong convictions, bold in announcing his belief and always ready to give force to his words by a steady support and a stern self-sacrifice. After the resignation of Mr. Hyde, the Rev. Wm. F. Arms supplied the church for nearly two years. He was called to the West where he has since labored. He was succeeded by the Rev. Wm. P. Hammond, who began his ministrations among the Greenwich people in 1867. Mr. Hammond passed five years in this field. They were years of honest endeavor and God gave the people his blessing. During his pastorate the church edifice was enlarged and thoroughly renovated. Prosperity shone upon the society. The pastor's soul was with his people. The work moved on quietly but truly. In the midst of these good promises Mr. Hammond felt obliged to relinquish his charge. The year of his removal

---

<sup>22</sup> During Mr. Bissell's pastorate quite large benevolent contributions were made, exceeding anything of the kind either before or since that time in the history of this church. The people began to raise funds for the parsonage-house, October, 1843.

1872, was the same year that the Rev. J. S. Bayne, a graduate of Williams' College, entered upon his service of four years with the church. The labors of Mr. Bayne were very profitable to this people. He still holds the esteem and affection of his old parishioners. But his pastorate here was brief, for a larger field opened to him and he accepted a call to Portland, where he continues to-day, largely blessed in his labor. A few months after the removal of Mr. Bayne, Mr. Granville W. Nims, a graduate of Amherst College, and a student in Union Theological Seminary, N. Y., received an unanimous call to this church. Mr. Nims entered upon his duties here in June, 1876. In October, 1877, he was ordained, the Rev. C. R. Treat preaching the ordination sermon. After a little more than two years of energetic service, Mr. Nims resigned this charge. It had long been his idea to continue his studies in Europe. The opportunity occurred, and immediately after his resignation he sailed for the continent where he is engaged in literary pursuits at the present time. The successor of the Rev. Mr. Nims is the present incumbent who was ordained and installed pastor of this church, February 27th, 1879.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> The council convened for the ordaining and installing of the present pastor was composed of delegates and clergymen from the following churches: Bridgeport (2nd), Darien, Fairfield, Greenfield, Southport, North Greenwich, Norwalk, Georgetown, Stamford, Green Farm, Westport, Greenwich (2nd), Puritan Church, Brooklyn, (N. Y.), Wilton, North Stamford, Ridgefield, Broadway Tabernacle, New York, and others. A number of clergymen present not engaged in clerical duties were invited to sit in the council as corresponding members. The morning hours were given to the examination of the candidate. A bountiful collation was served by the ladies at half past twelve o'clock, to between one and two hundred guests. The afternoon services began at two o'clock. Prayer was offered by the Rev. W. P. Hammond, a former pastor of the church. Rev. B. F. Bradford read from John's First Epistle, the first chapter; and the Rev. Mr. Pike, of Stamford, lead the people in prayer. After Rev. Willard Scott read the hymn "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name," the congregation joined in earnest song. The sermon was delivered by the Rev. Wm. J. Tucker, D.D., of the Madison Square Presbyterian Church, New York. 1st John ii chap. 1st verse; "My little children these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." It was God's truth presented in a most eloquent manner. At the conclusion of the sermon, Rev. F. M. Van Slyke, of Pilgrim Baptist Church,

Your present pastor is the first one that has been installed over this church since the pastorate of the Rev. Thomas Payne, nearly forty years ago.<sup>24</sup>

We have briefly recited a history of our pastors and of their labor, with this first Church of Greenwich.<sup>26</sup> What says the voice of your historians as to the character of this people? This community has been marked by a spirit of prudence. The matters of the church have been conducted on strict and honest business principles. No debts have cast their gloomy shadows over pastor and people so that hope and faith were shattered. The spirit of economy has been rigid, even too

---

New York, read the hymn "How Firm a Foundation," which was sung by the congregation. The clergy were then invited to stand before the pulpit and share in the "laying on of hands." Rev. E. E. Rankin, D. D., the moderator of the council, offered the ordaining prayer. The right hand of fellowship was extended by the Rev. Charles A. Northrup, a classmate of the candidate. The installation followed. Rev. Charles R. Treat, of the 2nd Church of Greenwich, gave the charge to the pastor. His words were strong and helpful. Rev. G. B. Wilcox, D. D., of Stamford, gave the charge to the people in his usual, practical, earnest way. The exercises closed with the benediction by the pastor. The day was one of worth and joy to many people. The church was filled with an appreciative audience. Flowers in rich abundance gave perfume as well as beauty to the occasion. Many friends of the new pastor were present from New York and surrounding towns.

The clergy were represented by Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed and Congregational brethren. The new incumbent, Mr. Child, is a graduate of Whitestown Seminary, N. Y., class of '71; a graduate of Hamilton College, N. Y., class of '75; a graduate of Union Theological Seminary, New York, class of '78. He entered upon his labors with the Greenwich people the third Sabbath of January, 1879.

<sup>24</sup> January, 1878, the number of Congregational churches in Connecticut, was two hundred and ninety-eight. There were one hundred and fifty-seven installed pastors, and one hundred and twenty acting pastors. In 1864-5 there were one hundred and seventy-eight installed pastors, and fifty-five acting pastors. Installation appears to be not so popular as it was in the past. The acting pastor method has gained rapidly in favor.

<sup>26</sup> This Church united with the Second Church of Greenwich, First Church of Stamford, North Greenwich Church, Stanwich Church, North Stamford Church, Darien Church, Long Ridge church, to form the Fairfield South West Conference. This Conference holds four meetings annually—one in June, in September, in November and in February.

rigid at two or three crises. But the precept is ours, and the warnings of defeat or failure are to teach us wisdom in future years.<sup>27</sup>

The church has been marked by a spirit of independence. It is grand to see men self-reliant if they be also God-reliant. A church that is self-reliant and God-reliant will be sure to stamp an enduring impression upon the souls that touch it in any manner. Had this same spirit been the pervading characteristic during the two centuries and more of its life, the church had presented a different front to-day. But even as it is, the people have inherited a way of independent thinking and independent acting, which, when governed by right motives and wise principles, brings honor and glory to the Church of Christ.

The people have sometimes fallen into error; in their haste they have done what they condemn in sober, thoughtful hours; prejudice has moved them as it moves us all more or less; but a judicious care has turned this spirit of zeal to many good accounts. There came a time in the history of the church when it was necessary that funds be raised for a certain worthy purpose. It required self-sacrifice on the part of the people, but they met it. A worthy servant who, with her husband's generous aid had done great work for the people, took the matter in hand. She and her husband had saved money which they designed to expend in some needed home improvement requiring a considerable expense. When the time of giving came, this woman of noble self-sacrifice (whose name was Mrs. Letitia Ferris), said the church shall not suffer; and she sanctioned her words by giving the saved dollars towards the object presented. Such zealous action has marked many members of this community, be it said to their praise, else the legacy of this church had not been ours to-day.

---

<sup>27</sup> The following bequests have been made to the Society: William Grimes, 30 acres of land; Miss Eliza Lockwood, \$500; Miss Deborah Selleck, \$400.

United to the faults and virtues of this people, we find a large spirit of kindness. In many quiet ways their generous treatment of brother-laborers has been shown. We do not try to conceal the fact that unhappy events have occurred, that words have been spoken through these two centuries, that had better never have been spoken ; but in all the years this spirit of kindly interest and generous concern has been evinced in many ways, interpreting the worthier side of character.

The growth of the church has been greatly retarded by its peculiar situation. The loss of the support that came from our friends west of the Myanos, had a large influence upon the society. The Second Church, when it branched off from the parent society, not only left us in a weakly condition, it was itself in a very feeble state. But to-day we rejoice in the fact that the daughter church is one of the strongest and most efficient churches in Connecticut. Numbers of people who were residents of this parish are now helpers in the Second Church. Numbers of our people have also been drawn towards Stamford, and other places, and are to-day established in their second church home. This drain upon the First Church was a matter of course, and the people have uttered no words of opposition or complaint.

The growth of the church has been retarded by the fact that no business center has been builded in the community, so that the spirit of enterprise has winged its way to New York. Life, prosperity, vigorous action, steady endeavor, are the forces that build churches as well as factories and warehouses and institutions. And when these forces are bestowed on our neighbors, we lose so much of power and promise ourselves. Concentration of strength, unity of action, diligence in effort will repair the loss and enrich us all.

The struggles of this people have been many and severe. Times there were when it seemed that the church must fall. But "there is no difficulty to him who wills," as Kossuth says ;

and when this power of determination is wedded to a devout faith it saves churches as well as nations, and inspires men with a new, grand courage. When Epammondas, commander-in-chief of the Theban forces at the battle of Leuetra, gained a splendid victory over the Spartans and he was congratulated by his friends, he replied: "I think only of the joy it will give my mother." When those faithful servants, some of whom we have named, strove nobly to sustain the cause of truth in this community, this was the spirit of their reply to all gratulation: "We think only of the joy it will give our God." But doubt, and uncertainty, and struggle are past; and we speak trustfully when we say, as did the soldiers to their general when he bade them do their duty: "We stand firm; so help us God!" We are looking towards the future. We read the prospects of fruitful labor. "Be strong and of good courage," says the Divine Voice. We recite our present condition; unity of purpose; freedom from debt burdens; a revived faith; strong, helpful support; harmony, good-will; a kindling zeal in the cause of Christ—this is our church to-day. What shall it be to-morrow? What shall you be? Shall we carve the word "success" by our future toil and triumph? What shall be the meaning of your prosperity in this higher living and holier service? Its meaning is this: The growth and enrichment of mind; a purer, stronger and more sincere moral life; a deeper, intenser, more fruitful spiritual experience, and glory given to the name of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ.

The work is left to your doing; the cause has been given to your charge.<sup>28</sup> "Be strong and of a good courage." Let us

---

<sup>28</sup> In the early history of the church the people assembled for worship at eight o'clock in the morning. They brought their heaters and their lunchees with them. The pulpit was high above the heads of the people. Contributions were made by the magistrate and principal men of the congregation passing to the deacon's seat, and depositing their gifts in the cash box. Seats were assigned by an officer. Position and dignity in the community determined the matter of precedence.

bend with earnestness to the service. Let us put on the whole armor for the fight. Let us brave all difficulty and harassment and trial. So shall the Divine spirit breathe joy and encouragement, and peace into the soul, and we shall never know defeat. When John Quicke, a fervent disciple of the faith, was arrested by an officer and threatened with imprisonment, he exclaimed: "I know not where you are sending me, but this am I sure of, my heart is as full of comfort as it can hold." God grant that this shall be our testimony and song as we unite in fashioning our personal worth and influence, and in building up this church to the praise of Almighty God.

# First Congregational Church of Greenwich.

PASTOR,

REV. FRANK S. CHILD.

DEACONS,

1st. S. K. FERRIS,

2nd. —————

COMMITTEE MEN,

EDWARD SCHWERIN,

E. B. LOCKWOOD,

JOEL B. FORD.

TREASURER,

CHARLES HENDRIE.

CLERK,

NATHANIEL B. FERRIS.











LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 110 620 A

0